



The University of Pittsburgh  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

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# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF "PLACE" IN NEIGHBORHOOD -EMBEDDED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

# THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY'S CIVIC PURPOSE

*Most universities were founded with a civic purpose. They have a fundamental obligation to apply their skills, resources, and energy to address the most challenging issues in society. Research universities have a special role to play. Through scholarship that combines rigorous academic standards with community collaboration, broadly defined, research universities can deepen our understanding of issues and develop practical solutions that will make a difference. Through teaching that combines deep understanding of issues with engagement in community and global problem solving, they can give students the knowledge, analytical skills, and civic disposition required to address our greatest challenges.*



# URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

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# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

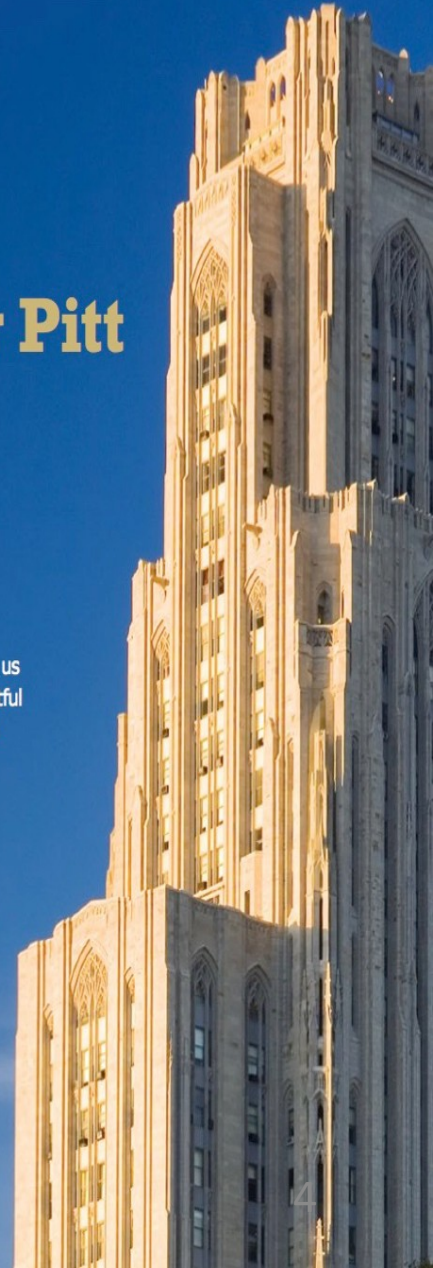
1. Advance Educational Excellence
2. Engage in Research Impact
- 3. Strengthen Communities**
4. Promote Diversity and Inclusion
5. Embrace the World
6. Build Foundational Strength

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH STRATEGIC PLAN

## The Plan for Pitt

"The plan will serve as a North Star to help us coordinate our actions and be more impactful as we all work closely together to advance our mission."

Chancellor Patrick Gallagher





# STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES



- Authentic, experiential learning opportunities for students
- Synergetic opportunities for research, drawing together multiple disciplines and multiple forms of knowing when collaboratively addressing complex community-based challenges
- Platforms for scholarship to have broader impacts
- New funding streams focused on societal impacts, local and regional problem-solving
- Institutional value as a sustained, invested partner across the city and region



# GEOGRAPHY AS LENS



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- Stewardship of Place
  - Anchor Institution Identity
  - Metropolitan University

... but what of the diversity of places within metropolitan areas?

# ANCHOR MISSION DASHBOARD

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



EQUITABLE LOCAL & MINORITY HIRING

EQUITABLE LOCAL & MINORITY BUSINESS PROCUREMENT

VIBRANT ARTS & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

THRIVING BUSINESS INCUBATION

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

SOUND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

## HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT



HEALTHY COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

SAFE STREETS & CAMPUSES

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

## COMMUNITY BUILDING & EDUCATION



STABLE & EFFECTIVE LOCAL PARTNERS

FINANCIALLY SECURE HOUSEHOLDS

EDUCATED YOUTH

**AASCU** American Association  
of State Colleges and  
Universities  
Delivering America's Promise

BECOMING A  
**STEWARD**  
OF **PLACE**

FOUR AREAS OF INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS



## Agency of Place (Gieryn, 2000)

*“Place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game—a force with detectable and independent effects” (p. 466)*

- *More than a “bundle of analytic variables” (p. 465)*
- *It is the meaning and value that is “interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined” there (p. 465).*

# NUANCE OF PLACE





# NUANCE OF PLACE



**Soul Stepping Parade | Aug 4th**  
STARTS @ 6pm LINE UP @ 5pm

**SAVE THE DATE**  
AUG 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>

**HARAMBEE  
BLACK  
ARTS  
FESTIVAL**

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Located at Kelly Street  
and Homewood Avenue

 **HARAMBEE UJIMA  
BLACK ARTS &  
CULTURAL ASSOCIATION**

Funding for the Harambee Black Arts Festival was provided by the Advancing the Black Arts in Pittsburgh Program, a partnership of The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments. Harambee Ujima is a consortium of The Diversity FOOTprint project of the Thomas Merton Center.

For More Information: [homewoodharambeeujiima@gmail.com](mailto:homewoodharambeeujiima@gmail.com)





# NUANCE OF PLACE





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**Homewood Concerned Citizens Council**

**HCCC**

**FEBRUARY—Monthly Community Meeting**

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

Homewood Library, Room 1 | 6:00 PM—7:30 PM

**Monthly Community Public Meeting**

with community residents, stakeholders,  
community leaders, business owners,  
up-coming developers, and our public officials.

*“Place demands our presence  
as neighbor”*

Pribbenow, 2015



# MAKING A COMMITMENT TO PLACE



## **Neighborhood-embedded Community Engagement Centers**

- ✓ Guided by an internal and community advisory council
- ✓ Platform to engage teaching and research with community agendas
- ✓ Staffed by people from/ knowledgeable about the community
- ✓ > 15 year commitments
- ✓ Dean/ School Involvement



# PLACE-BASED TRAJECTORY



Phase 1: Increased  
**Access** through Trust  
Building and Partner  
Development

Phase 2: Joint Agenda  
Development that  
yields Deep,  
Multidisciplinary  
Engagement

Phase 3: Sustained  
Involvement and  
Capacity Building  
supported by  
community-based  
infrastructure

## Place Building (Kimball & Thomas, 2012)

*“...the degree to which an organization values and invests in its social and geographical location, its “local community”—i.e., how it actively creates place from space (Tuan, 1977). ...[A]ll community engagement, whether it be participatory and reciprocal or technocratic and linear, represents a kind of place-building practice whose outcomes— economic and social relations, ethical conduct, construction and treatment of built and natural environments— embody a set of intrinsic beliefs and values motivating engagement strategies.”*

Influenced by  
Community  
Development/  
Community  
Planning  
Processes

Attentive to  
Boundary-  
spanner  
Capacity  
Building

Explicitly  
oriented toward  
Democratic  
Civic  
Engagement

Responsive to  
place



## 4 Frames



# Influenced by Community Planning/ Development



- Joining the ecosystem
- Learner, supporter, resource partner
- Mindful of scale



## “NEXT STEPS PART 1”

FEATURING

### “THE PEOPLE’S VISION FOR A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN”

THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017

5:30-8PM

Community Empowerment Association  
7120 Kelly Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

Calling All...  
Residents  
Community  
Organizations

WHO'S  
DOING  
WHAT IN  
HOMEWOOD

# Attentive to Boundary Spanner Capacity Building



- Knowledgeable of (and proficient in) best practices of engaged scholarship
- Prepared for the context
- Attuned to closed, open, & invited spaces
- Culturally humble, Collaborative, Active Listener, Asset-oriented, Look for action



# Oriented to Democratic Civic Engagement



Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2008

	<b>Civic Engagement (Focus on Activity and Place)</b>	<b>Democratic Civic Engagement (Focus on Purpose and Process)</b>
<b>Community Relationships</b>	Partnerships and mutuality	Reciprocity
	Deficit-based understanding of community	Asset-based understanding of community
	Academic work done <i>for</i> the public	Academic work done <i>with</i> the public
<b>Knowledge production/research</b>	Applied	Inclusive, collaborative, problem-oriented
	Unidirectional flow of knowledge	Multi-directional flow of knowledge
<b>Epistemology</b>	Positivist/scientific/technocratic	Relational, localized, contextual
	Distinction between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers	Co-creation of knowledge
	Primacy of academic knowledge	Shared authority for knowledge creation
	University as the center of public problem-solving	University as a part of an ecosystem of knowledge production addressing public problem-solving
<b>Political Dimension</b>	Apolitical engagement	Facilitating an inclusive, collaborative, and deliberative democracy
<b>Outcome</b>	Knowledge generation and dissemination through community involvement	Community change that results from the co-creation of knowledge

# Responsive to Place



Responsive to the  
*interpreted,*  
*narrated,*  
*perceived*  
(Gieryn, 2000)  
sense of place:

- Histories
- Sociocultural Environment
- Power dynamics
- Community trauma

“Instead of making the community fit into the culture of the University, I would say, have the University engage and try to fit into the culture of that is already there, because that is something that has been there for generations and generations.”

“We know that there’s been a lot of studies [and] research done and nothing’s happened, so it’s like okay, we’ve been through this before, and I’m not answering any more questions. [People] are just suspicious. ‘You’re getting this information so that you can be more effective in gentrification.’ And that’s normal when you’re looking at an institution as huge and as powerful as Pitt...”